

News Release

For Immediate Release

May 9, 2006

For More Information Contact: Sheila Mace, PR Coordinator

Phone: 870-612-6070

Fax: 870-612-3248

Email: smace@wrmc.com

Local Medical and Emergency Agencies Participate in Bioterrorism/Disaster Drill

(Batesville, Ark.) – The North Central Region (NCR), of the Arkansas Bioterrorism Committee conducted a Bioterrorism/Disaster Tabletop Exercise on Thursday at White River Medical Center in Batesville. Arkansas Department of Health, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management and representatives from the 13 counties that are a part of the North Central Region participated.

The drill was facilitated by Diane M Hughes, Safety Compliance Coordinator at St. Joseph's Mercy Health Center in Hot Springs and Joy A. Sanders, Certified Emergency Manager with the Garland County Department of Emergency Management. They have extensive experience in disaster planning and have worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency FEMA planning and executing drills. As facilitators, Hughes and Sanders presented the drill scenario and helped the group move through the process.

In a table top drill the scenario is presented by the facilitators and each county creates a written response based on existing policies. Throughout the exercise the facilitators update and add information that may effect the decision making process. The exercise was developed and carried out to address operational and policy level responses to a public

health emergency in North Central Arkansas. The exercise is intended to provide an opportunity to explore a range of options and possible approaches in the event of an actual emergency. The objectives of the exercise were to test the decision making process, identify areas for refinement, review interaction and cooperation between local, state and federal agencies, identify the strengths and weaknesses of local resource coordination, develop cooperation between medical and criminal investigation, access medical capabilities and test media response plans.

“We are so pleased to have Diane and Joy with us today,” said Tony Thompson, Chairman, and NCR Bioterrorism Committee. “They are experienced, capable managers and have worked with national leaders in the field of disaster planning. Their input has been extremely valuable to our regional preparedness efforts.”

Representatives from Independence County were; Michele Wood, Pat Ferguson, Gina Reves, Peggy Traw, Sissy Ford, Tony Thompson, and Danny Oliver from White River Medical Center, Glen Willis, Independence County OES Coordinator, Delores Jones and Jim Reynolds, Arkansas Department of Health, Brent Gleghorn Batesville Fire Department and Myra Wood, Vital Link.

The North Central Region Bioterrorism Committee is part of statewide effort coordinated by the Arkansas Department of Health and the Arkansas Hospital Association. The state is divided into seven regions and each of those regions is responsible for development of a regional disaster preparedness plan. The North Central Region includes Baxter, Boone, Cleburne, Fulton, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Searcy, Stone, Sharp, White, Woodruff and Van Buren counties. The North Central Region Bioterrorism Committee is a coordinated effort between, hospitals, local and state governments, emergency response agencies and the private sector to ensure that North Central Arkansas can adequately respond to a crisis.