

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Regional Medical and Emergency Agencies Participate in Bioterrorism/Disaster Drill

(Batesville, Ark.) – Hospital members of the North Central Region (NCR) of the Arkansas Bioterrorism Committee conducted a joint Bioterrorism/Disaster Drill today. Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services, 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 designed and supervised by Diane M Hughes, Emergency Planning Consultant 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.

At each participating hospital a set of envelopes with timed events lead hospital staff, victims and other agencies through the drill scenario. Throughout the exercise the updated and additional information that may effect the decision making process is made available. An independent evaluator observed the execution of policies and procedures related to the drill.

At the conclusion of the drill, participants review the drill with the evaluator identifying best practices and opportunities for improvement. Reports from all the evaluators are compiled into an After Action Report and provided to the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services Bioterrorism Coordinator. Individual After Action Reports are provided to all participating agencies.

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, access medical capabilities and test media response plans.

Hospitals in the North Central Region participating are; Baptist Health – Heber Springs, Baxter Regional Medical Center, Central Arkansas Hospital, Community Medical Center of Izard County, Fulton County Hospital, Harris Hospital, Newport Hospital, Ozark Medical Center, Stone County Medical Center, White County Medical Center and White River Medical Center.

Locally, Batesville Fire Department, Independence County Office of Emergency Services, Independence County Sheriff's Office and Boy Scout Troups 166, 151 and 375 participated in the drill.

The North Central Region Bioterrorism Committee is part of statewide effort coordinated by the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services 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.