

## **White River Medical Center Participates in Statewide Readiness Exercise**

**October, 2007** - Batesville, Ark - White River Medical Center (WRMC) took part in a statewide exercise today to demonstrate how well emergency responders could work together during an actual terrorist attack involving anthrax. The exercise was designed to help planners establish protocols, especially for the distribution of medicine to people who might be affected all over the state. The exercise evaluated the capability of participating agencies to receive and rapidly distribute medication across the state using regional distribution centers, evaluated the hospitals' ability to understand the state's Mass Distribution Plan and execute with proper personnel, and tested communications systems and operational abilities.

“Whether it’s anthrax or Avian Influenza, the threat to the public is one that we must be prepared to meet with well-planned action,” stated Gary Bebow, CEO/Administrator “The opportunity to practice our response in a simulated exercise could possibly make the difference between life and death if events like these were to occur in Arkansas.”

The exercise focused on the delivery of drugs stored at the Strategic National Stockpile location in Arkansas to eighty-six (86) participating hospitals in every part of the state as quickly as possible. The Arkansas National Guard actually delivered surplus Amoxicillin during the drill to regional distribution points for pickup by hospitals to demonstrate that real medications could be transported safely.

CDC's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) has large quantities of medicine and medical supplies to protect the American public if there is a public health emergency (terrorist attack, flu outbreak, earthquake) severe enough to cause local supplies to run out. Once Federal and local authorities agree that the SNS is needed, medicines will be delivered to any state in the U.S. within 12 hours. Each state has plans to receive and distribute SNS medicine and medical supplies to local communities as quickly as possible.

The exercise included a wide range of public and private partners: the Arkansas National Guard, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences School of Pharmacy, eighty six Acute Care Hospitals, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, the ADH Emergency Medical Services Department, local law enforcement agencies, and State and local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).

WRMC is a 200-bed regional referral center and the flagship facility of White River Health System (WRHS). WRHS is a not-for-profit healthcare system serving residents throughout North Central Arkansas. The system includes hospitals, outpatient facilities, primary care and specialty physician office practices, home health and hospice care, long-term care facilities and a medical equipment company. White River Health System is a member of the Premier Alliance, the American Hospital Association, and the Arkansas Hospital Association and licensed by the Arkansas Department of Health.