

What is the Douglas County Public Health Service Doing to Prepare for Emergencies?

Collaborating with Community Partners:

The Douglas County Public Health Service knows that when an emergency happens, it will not respond alone. The Public Health Service meets regularly with community partners to seek information, share ideas, and ensure each entity knows how the other will respond during an emergency. The Public Health Service leads a group called the *Pan Flu Partners* that includes representatives from:

- City of Superior and Douglas County officials
- Healthcare Organizations
- Correctional Facilities
- Emergency Management
- Schools
- Law Enforcement
- Communities of Faith
- Community Organizations

Developing a Public Health Emergency Plan:

In collaboration with the Western Region Partnership for Public Health Preparedness (WRPPHP), Douglas County has adopted and localized a Public Health Emergency Plan (PHEP). The PHEP provides guidance and instructions for all employees involved in a Public Health emergency response. The plan takes an “All Hazards” approach and includes guidance for public health staff to respond to many different types of emergencies including infectious disease outbreaks, bioterrorism, environmental health dangers, or severe weather. The PHEP is a work in progress and is continually updated with new information.

Continuing Education for Staff:

In order to ensure a competent workforce, the Douglas County Department of Health and Human Services participates in annual staff evaluation and trainings. All staff have received formal training in Incident Command System. Key staff is also evaluated annually to identify strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and skills. On-going trainings are done to ensure competency in all areas of preparedness.

Evaluating Effectiveness:

Through a combination of functional exercises, tabletop exercises, and an annual review from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Public Health Service is able to ensure the PHEP remains useful and up-to-date. Exercises are often preformed unannounced, and staff are able to demonstrate a working knowledge of the PHEP. All exercises, and any real events, are evaluated using a tool developed by the federal government called HSEEP (Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation). As a result of the evaluation, the Public Health Service identifies opportunities to improve its response, and a plan is created and steps taken to ensure this is corrected.