

COUNTY, HEALTH CARE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROFESSIONALS EXERCISE “ALTERNATE CARE SITE” READINESS

Plan addresses dealing with widespread illness or injuries

Poughkeepsie, NY ... Local, regional and state health care and emergency response professionals came together today to conduct a table top training exercise on a draft “Alternate Care Site” plan designed to deal with a surge in patient volume in the local health care system that exceeds capacity in the event of a widespread or pandemic illness. The event was hosted by the Dutchess County Departments of Health and Emergency Response and was led by representatives from New York Medical College of Valhalla. The event was held at the Dutchess County Emergency Response Center on Creek Road in Hyde Park.

In the event that Dutchess County is impacted by widespread illness or other event where there is overwhelming demand on local hospitals, an Alternate Care Site (ACS) would be activated to establish an offsite, temporary health care location for the treatment of patients with less severe illness and allow the hospitals to treat the more critically ill. Today’s exercise was part of a multi-year Public Health Preparedness “Alternate Care Site” planning effort conducted by the Department of Health, Emergency Response and the three hospitals in Dutchess County.

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro said, “As we have sadly witnessed during the tragic events in Boston and Texas, a large scale or widespread event can create huge demand on local hospitals. It is critical to have a plan of action in place that can be relied upon during such incidents where time is critical for the health and safety of residents.”

Dutchess County Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael C. Caldwell said, “Our health care system locally is very capable and meets the everyday needs of our community. The Alternate Care Site plan and today’s exercise is designed for an extraordinary event. Assisting the local health care system by providing a mechanism to treat certain types of patients is the primary goal of this plan. Once established, the ACS can provide a site to treat those with less critical illnesses.”

Community partners participating in today’s event included Vassar Brothers Medical Center, Northern Dutchess Hospital, St. Francis Hospital, American Red Cross, NYS Department of Health, and NYS Office of Emergency Management. County agencies represented included the Departments of Health, Emergency Response, Community and Family Services, Office for the Aging, Mental Hygiene, Public Works, Office of Central and Information Services, Planning and Development, Public Transit, Medical Reserve Corps of Dutchess County as well as representatives from the County Attorney’s and County Executive’s offices.

Today’s event was one in a series of training and educational opportunities regarding Alternate Care Site Planning for the County and its partners; it was supported through a grant from the Department of Homeland Security.

Last year, the Dutchess County Department of Emergency Response and the Medical Examiner’s Office hosted a Mass Fatality training exercise, the largest training exercise of its kind in the nation, in partnership with the Regional Catastrophic Planning Team (RCPT) of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

County Executive Molinaro concluded, “There is no way to know what event or emergency the County may have to face. Our goal is to plan and train for a wide range of events and situations, each time gaining knowledge and experience that can be practically applied in the event of an actual large scale emergency event.”

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